

# Safety ...Off The Job

## Wood Stoves And Fireplaces

While fireplaces are usually considered a decorative alternative, the use of a woodstove in the home has become quite a popular choice as the main source of heat. And while the fireplace may cut down on heating bills, keep in mind you are still dealing with fire. And fire can be deadly.

### **The most immediate hazards of a fireplace or wood stove are these:**

- Fire may escape directly, in the form of hot coals or sparks;
- Radiant heat may be great enough to ignite nearby combustible materials;
- Flammable residues in the chimney may catch fire and spread to adjacent wood framing or to the roof.

The benefits of stoves and fireplaces can be realized in a safe home environment only through proper installation and regular maintenance.

If you plan to install or alter a stove or a fireplace, the project must be carefully carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and at the same time meet fire prevention or building code regulations of the region where you live. Find out what the building codes are in your area before you begin installations of any kind.

Usually fire codes provide specific instructions for stove placement. It is important to place the appliance a safe distance between the fire and nearby walls as wood can ignite at

temperatures as low as 200°F which is much less than the 800°F temperature radiated by some stoves! Most codes require protective shields behind and beneath a stove and its flue to dissipate heat before it reaches combustible wall or floor materials. Most codes also specify the thickness of the masonry in a fireplace and chimney and the amount of air space that is required between the masonry and combustible interior walls.

Regular inspection, cleaning and maintenance are the best insurance against chimney fires and fires resulting from a damaged stove or flue. Thoroughly check the entire system before lighting the first fire of the season and repeat inspections on a regular basis every month or so.

### **Safety Tips for Stoves and Fireplaces:**

- Use proper accessories for your wood burning system. Cradle shaped grates will keep burning logs from falling or rolling beyond the firebox opening.
- A metal container provides safe transport of ashes, which may contain hot coals. Store them in a safe place outdoors for at least 24 hours before discarding them.
- Every fireplace requires a close-fitting screen or glass doors to prevent sparks and hot coals from popping out.
- Pay attention to the fire itself. Never allow a stove to become so hot the

metal glows. Heat this intense can cause dangerous cracks.

- There must be a sufficient supply of fresh air through outside ducts to ensure good combustion in the fireplace.
- Don't burn trash, plastic, Christmas trees, wrapping paper or anything that provides a sudden, intense flame.
- If you do have a chimney fire, cut off the chimney's air supply to starve the fire and call your fire department.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy to the fireplace or stove and be trained in its use. A fire extinguisher will not help if you don't know how to use it.
- Burn only the fuels for which a stove is designed. Avoid any substance that could increase the heat of the fire—starter fluids, coal, cardboard and especially trash such as Christmas tree boughs and plastic wrappings.
- Never store extra firewood so close to the flames it might ignite outside the firebox.

If fire does break out you can ensure an early warning with properly installed smoke detectors.

*Fireplaces and wood stoves are great alternatives for heating. Just make sure you are aware and can handle the possible dangers associated with them.*

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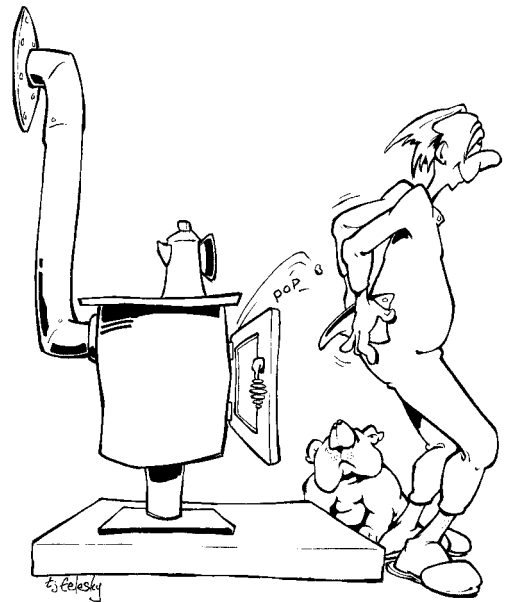
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